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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a format developed to confront those things that are taken for granted (TFGs) by inservice teachers of grades 2 through 5 as they struggled with learning to improve the teaching of writing in their school through the use of focused, rule-governed reflection on artifacts of practice. In addition to reflection, the participants in this study were involved in in-class modeling, teach teaching, and planning. The study took place in a school district in rural Texas, and all six participating teachers lived nearby. Teachers were engaged in the writing improvement project in response to the performance of students in the writing portion of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills. The researcher modeled the T-I-P Writing Process for teachers focusing on "Teach" writing strategies, "Introduce" rhetorical and mechanical skills, and allow time for "Practice." Reflective Practice Discussion Group (RDPG) meetings were held about once a month. Data were collected through teacher interviews and transcripts of RDGP meetings. Findings show that the dominant cultural narrative of U.S. education tends to discount students, but they also indicate that it is possible to develop processes to transform that narrative to that it complies more closely with what is known about teaching and learning and student responsibility and engagement. The study confirms that transformative change occurs slowly, but that there are stages that allow teachers to confront the TFGs . Implications for instruction are discussed. (Contains 54 references.) (SLD)

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Points of Illumination: Building Learning Communities through Focused Reflection in Schools as an Antidote to External Pressure

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Points of Illumination: Building Learning Communities through Focused Reflection in Schools as an Antidote to External Pressure

Cultural narratives represent powerful, often unshakable, models of knowledge that are embedded in language and discourse (Foucault, 1972). The cultural narrative attached to teaching and learning in the United States appears to be one such narrative that guides much of the public discourse about education, whether that discussion is political or simply a conversation among teachers gathered in the school faculty lounge. Ritchie & Wilson (2002e) argue that the strength of the narrative attached to teaching and learning is the result of an accidental apprenticeship consisting of some 13,000+ hours of observation of teaching while we served as students from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The basic outline of the American cultural narrative attached to teaching and learning is simple and tends to shape the identity of those entering the teaching profession as well as those already engaged in the practice of teaching in the schools. Teachers are hard working, dedicated individuals willing to sacrifice personal gain for a loftier social goal. Teachers are expected to impart their accumulated knowledge to their students through a series of exercises, lectures, and teacher-led discussions that conserve cultural values and prepare students for their roles in society. By creating normative standards and assessing student performance on those standards society can be assured that teachers are, in fact, performing at expected levels. Within this powerful cultural narrative there are subsets of expectations, for example, teachers are expected to manage their classrooms, control disruptive students within their classrooms. In addition, they are expected to participate in after school activities and join committees for the benefit of the school without the benefit of additional compensation.

The cultural narrative in the United States about teaching and learning is one deeply grounded in Logical Positivism. Underlying assumptions of confidence in the measurability of objectives and in the results of instruction have deep roots in this tradition leading to the imposition of normative standards on schools and normative assessments on students. The American narrative finds additional support in theories of Behaviorism leading to notions of classroom control through as set of rules, rewards, and punishments as important issues to teaching and learning.

Culturally, this narrative plays out in the media in a number of ways. Ritchie & Wilson (2002e) point to the "cartoons" portrayed in the media that either glorify male teachers in the movies such as Goodbye Mr. Chips, Mr.

Holland's Opus, or Robin Williams' role in Dead Poets Society, or are disingenuous to women frequently appearing as heroine stories in weekly news magazines or newspapers. In these stories heroes or heroines appear as caring, dedicated, unselfish, superhuman caricatures of teachers.

McNeil (McNeil, 1986) has argued that a disconnect between curriculum and instruction and administrative functions permeate the professional discourse in teaching. In more current television we find caricatures dealing with unruly, hostile and violent students emphasizing the need for tight administrative control in schools. In shows like Boston Public story lines point to the need for social control and discipline within our schools. Movies like Stand By Me emphasize the need for administrative discipline in schools. Each of these examples, and more, contribute to the American cultural narrative about teaching and learning.

Inservice teachers have substantially reified the cultural narrative attached to teaching and learning. This narrative has considerable power precisely because it is ubiquitous and unexamined. It is the 'taken-for-granted' that guides daily practice that is never confronted or challenged. So classroom teachers balk at theoretical approaches to teaching and learning that they find in conflict with their own "knowledge in practice" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). It is not uncommon for teachers to state with conviction, "Oh, that sounds really great," when confronted with new ideas, "but it will never work in my class. You don't know my kids."

The problem is that unless this narrative is examined and challenged there is no hope of improving teaching and learning in American schools. Cuban (1993) points out that teachers tend to teach the way they were taught. Given the powerful nature of the cultural narrative and the paucity of teacher education programs to overcome the effects of this narrative it should not be surprising to anyone. Teacher education programs often have the goal of being transformative, helping students overcome unexamined ideas of teaching and learning through reflective approaches to instruction. The typical teacher education program in elementary education includes 850+ contact hours of required classroom time and typical secondary certification programs include 600+ contact hours of required classroom time. It is no small wonder that when teacher education programs are balanced against the 13,000+ hours of accidental apprenticeship and the caricatures of teachers depicted in the media that teacher education programs fail to transform students as they segue from classroom and student to teacher in the classroom.

Ritchie & Wilson (2002e) argue that in order for transformation to take place preservice teachers and inservice teachers must have opportunity to

problematize the larger cultural narrative that drives their thinking about teaching and learning. In examining the underlying notions of any ubiquitous cultural narrative questions of language must be addressed. Foucault (1972) addresses issues of power contained within language in the sense that within the language itself lays the foundations of knowledge. Derrida (1999; 2002) insists that language forms the basis of 'horizon', a relationship to cultural roots within which identity forms. Normal discourse (Rorty, 1979) allows conversations to proceed along lines of commonly understood normative awareness making elaboration hardly necessary. In short, the normative narrative retains much of its power precisely because it is normative and allows us to interface with our surroundings in relative safety because the answers to troubling questions are simply understood (Bruner, 1990).

In teaching and learning, however, the normative narrative runs significantly contrary to that which is understood by many professionals as effective pedagogy. Best practice (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998) includes approaches tend to be student-centered, experiential, holistic and authentic. They also tend to be reflective (Carini, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Passman, 1999, 2002c; Zemelman et al., 1998), collaborative (Burnaford, Aprill, & Weiss, 2000; Burnaford, Fisher, & Hobson, 1996)and democratic (Freire, 1970; Purpel & Shapiro, 1995; Shor, 1992). In addition, best practice tends to include elements of constructivist approaches (Vygotsky, 1978), challenging and rigorous content (Newmann, Byrk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Newmann, Lopez, & Bryk, 1998), and opportunities for both social learning (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995) and individual synthesis (Byrk, Thum, Easton, & Luppescu, 1998).

The problem facing teacher educators and professional developers is embedded in the difficult task of finding ways to encourage teachers, both preservice and inservice, to confront their taken-for-granteds (TFG's) in meaningful and transformative ways. Ritchie & Wilson (2002e) suggest that pre-service teachers can challenge and problematize their TFG's by engaging in a critical examination of their own narratives both before, during and after their transition into the classroom.

In addition to reflection in pre-service education, a long-standing tradition in professional development for in-service teachers holds that transformative development is often a product of active and focused reflection on teaching practice (e.g., Clark, 1994; Cole & Knowles, 2000; P. A. Daniels, 1997; Grimmett, 1988; Passman, 2002c; Waxman, 1988). Still others argue that teacher reflection, as a part of teacher research, is a fundamental factor in transforming teacher practice (e.g., Berthoff, 1987; Burnaford et al., 1996;

Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith, 1994; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hubbard & Power, 1993; Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992).

This paper reports on a powerful format for confronting the TFG's of teaching by in-service teachers as they struggled with learning to improve the teaching of writing in their school through the use of focused, rule-governed reflection on artifacts of practice. In addition to reflection, the participants in this study participated in in-class modeling, team teaching and planning.

The Lawrenceville Project

Lawrenceville (all names of places and people are pseudonyms) is a small rural town located about 30 miles east of South Plaines, Texas. South Plaines is a mid sized city of nearly 200,000 people deeply rooted in oil and cotton industries as an economic base. It is also home to a large state university and a small religious college. Lawrenceville is a town of nearly 1500 people on the eastern edge of Calvado County. It is a cotton town with much of the commercial ventures in the town devoted to agricultural support. A large farm equipment dealer is prominently found on the main highway just to the east of town. Banks advertise farm loans and the cotton gin serves as the local co-op. Cotton fields stretch out as far as the eye can see in all directions. A fairly large migrant population in town is quite mobile moving to wherever there is planting or picking to be done.

The Lawrenceville Independent School District (LISD) serves the entire western third of Calvado County from a single campus that includes pre-school through 12th grade classrooms. The school enrollment hovers around 250 students annually across all grades. There is a significant mobility issue in the school primarily due to the migrant families that accounts for a significant fluctuation in enrollment during the school year. As a result the elementary school developed a highly successful migrant educational program for the summer months when most of that population is at home and students of migrant families are able to attend school on a regular basis.

The population that LISD serves is racially diverse. About 30% are Caucasian, 50% Hispanic, and 20% African-American. This diversity is reflected in the school population overall, although not necessarily grade-by-grade. There is less economic diversity with most students (over 90%) participating in the free or reduced lunch program in the school. Most students also participate in a breakfast program as well. LISD also houses a countywide special education program in which severely disabled children participate in least restrictive classrooms. Children in wheelchairs are a

common sight in the school. Self-contained special education rooms also exist for exceptional children as well. Physical and occupational therapy programs are available for students in need.

The area surrounding LISD is rich farmland, mostly devoted to the raising of cotton. The off crop is generally peanuts although fields of sorghum can also be seen from time to time. Like most whose life is tied inextricably to the land, the parents of the children enrolled in LISD complain if the weather is too cold, too hot, if there is too much rain or not enough. They complain about the price of cotton, peanuts and sorghum. They complain about the cost of planting, harvesting and processing their crop insisting that they scarcely make a profit anymore. All this complaining rubs off on their children as they find reason to complain about school, lunches, the older kids, the younger kids, their siblings and so on.

The teachers participating in this study all come from the surrounding area. Three participants live within the city limits of Lawrenceville. One lives in the nearby town of Idasue. Another lives about thirty miles away on a farm near Wrigleyton. The sixth participant lives about fifty miles to the northwest on a small farm with an oil well in the front yard near Levelview. Each of the participants has roots deeply connected to the land and the area in which they work. Four of the participating teachers teach in order to secure health insurance for their families. The other two, who are not farmers, teach for reasons that tend more toward social consciousness than for strictly economic reasons.

Lawrenceville is a town of about 1500 people. There is a Circle K gas station and grocery store on the corner of Main Street and the highway. A small restaurant located on Main Street serves an eclectic menu of Mexican food and hamburgers. The waitress is the owner, cook and dishwasher and you just have to be patient and wait for your food. A few scattered businesses line Main Street close to the bank. At last count there were eight churches in town and two others can be found on the edge of town. The town has two cotton gins, one is in a state of disrepair and the other, the new gin, stands prominently across the farm access road from the old gin on the main highway. Not far down the main highway is a farm equipment supply house where cotton-picking machines, tractors, cotton bailers, and other necessary farm equipment are displayed in an open yard. The John Deere Green in the yard strikes one; it is the only green seen for miles around. Cotton is the prominent feature of the landscape.

The LISD campus consists of five buildings, all but one of which is connected by either an indoor or outdoor walkway. The preschool building is next to the elementary building. The elementary building consists of a new addition and

the old school building. The new addition houses the school auditorium used by all grades pre-K through 12. The old school building allocates space to the upper grades, 5th and 6th grades are housed on the second floor. The first floor is devoted to computer labs and is home to the regional special education center. A stand alone modular building to the east of the special education center houses self-contained classrooms for severely challenged students. A covered walkway connects the elementary complex with the junior high and senior high school building. Grades 7 through 12 hold classes in this building. The building also contains the district office, the physical education complex for all grades, and the school lunchroom, also used for all grades, pre-K through 12.

Physically, the buildings are low, single story units that seem to cling to the prairie surrounding the campus, all save the old building which climbs two stories above the ground, standing like a watchtower protecting all that is inside. Hallways throughout are narrow, often cluttered with desks, boxes, chairs, or other 'stuff.' Student work is prominently displayed on the walls of the elementary school but that is missing in the high school building. In the high school the walls are lined with pictures of graduates from years past going back in time to the 1920's. Tracing those composite pictures tell a grand story about the history of LISD and the surrounding communities just in looking at the numbers. Some years there were as few as five graduating seniors where others were packed with up to thirty-three. In all, the school is inviting, steeped in tradition, and rooted in its historical connections to the community.

The Problem

I was first contacted by the LISD through a contact I had at the Educational Service Center Region XVII (ESC). The ESC is an independent agency of the Texas Education Agency offering state services to schools on a regional basis. In this case, the ESC, through its special education and English language arts divisions working in tandem, were offering services to LISD in order to improve the performance of 4th grade writing on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) statewide writing assessment. Earlier in the year, as a result of poor performance by the 4th grade on the TAAS writing exam, the Texas Education Agency (TEA) labeled the elementary school "low-performing". 4th grade students achieved only a 44% pass rate on the test.

An initial meeting between the LISD superintendent, the high school principal, the elementary school principal, two representatives of the ESC and me was arranged by Peggy, my contact at the ESC. During this meeting I stressed the following points. First, if there were any hope of improving

writing in the elementary school, there could be no talk of the TAAS. Secondly, in order to improve writing performance there could be no talk of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) standards. Rather, we had to accomplish two essential goals. First, students had to begin to think of themselves as authors. This is an important goal of process writing theory (e.g., Atwell, 1987; Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1975). Additionally, we had to focus on good writing pedagogy, a pedagogy designed to help students discover that they had something important to say through their own writing practice (e.g., H. Daniels & Zemelman, 1985; Murray, 1997). I insisted that we adopt the mantra: "Good Teaching takes care of Bad Testing!"

After a short period of negotiation extending over two to three weeks we designed a professional development program concentrating on the 2nd through 5th grades with the following components. An initial whole school, all day in-service was planned. Mr. Van Bier, the Superintendent, insisted that the in-service include everyone that had anything to do with the LISD campus, from the lunchroom staff and janitorial support staff to the principals across every grade served by the school. He included himself in that picture. Over 75 people attended the initial in-service. Immediately following the in-service I visited classes once a week for a full school day. We agreed to concentrate on the 3rd and 4th grades and alternating service to the 2nd and 5th. By the middle of the project the 6th grade teachers wanted in as well and they were added. Finally, a group of six teachers participated in a focused reflection process designed to explore artifacts of teaching and learning.

The Project Defined

The work at LISD was divided into three distinct phases. Phase one lasted until the close of the whole-school inservice day. Our intent was to engage teachers, administrators and staff in a preliminary understanding of the approach to writing that I was going to model in the school. Phase two and three overlapped. In phase two, I modeled 'best practice' writing approaches in the classroom for the teachers. It is important to make the distinction that I was there to serve teachers as my "clients." While I worked directly with students in the classrooms with teachers directly observing and commenting on the lessons I taught, students remained the "clients" of the teachers. Phase three brought the teachers, Peggy and I together for reflective discussions in what I have come to call the Reflective Practice Discussion Group (RPDG).

I modeled what I have called the T-I-P Writing Process for teachers in their classrooms. T-I-P is an acronym for: TEACH writing strategies, INTRODUCE rhetorical and mechanical skills, and allow time for frequent

and sustained PRACTICE in the classroom (Passman, 2001b). At the end of each day spent in the school I held informal discussions with teachers to summarize the events of the day.

The RPDG sessions occurred about once each month. Based on the Prospect Documentary Process (Carini, 1986), each RPDG session is divided into five distinct segments. Each RPDG session is formed around an artifact of practice. In the case of the LISD RPDG we used student produced writing as the artifact that formed the discussion. In the first segment of the RPDG participants sat silently, reading and making notations about the contents of the writing they were presented. One of the participants was responsible for bringing the writing to each session. In the second segment, participants described what they saw in the writing. The only two rules that had to be followed were: 1) That the discussion be void of judgmental language, and 2) That the participant responsible for the writing only listen to the others describe her students' work. The third segment, participants engaged in speculation and questioning using the artifacts as a point of reference. The rules for segment two apply here as well. In the penultimate segment roles are reversed. Now the participant responsible for the segment responds by answering questions and speculations and he or she also responds to the question: "What did I find unexpected in the conversation so far. Finally, in the final segment, all participants engage in an open discussion focusing on the question: "What does this discussion have to do with our practice as elementary and middle-school teachers?"

Data Collected and Analyzed

I collected data from several sources. Each participant teacher participated in a set of interviews focusing on aspects of their attitude toward teaching and learning. Tapes were made of teacher interviews. I kept a set of field notes that I considered to be historical in nature. By historical I mean that they were recorded sometime after the fact, usually in the evening after working in the school for the whole day. Sometimes, however, the field notes were compiled a day or two after the fact. They are more reflective in nature than contemporary. Additionally, transcripts were made of each RPDG session. Finally, teachers' journals were analyzed.

All data was analyzed using qualitative methodology. Data was first analyzed using an open coding methodology (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Redundant reading of transcripts continued using open coding until no new codes could be produced that might add to understanding. Semiotic Cluster Analysis (Feldman, 1995) was then used to construct models or metaphors of discourse that help form a meaningful understanding of this project.

Discussion

This analysis primarily focuses on the discussions in the RPDG sessions. The patterns constructed in this analysis hold through teacher interviews, teacher journals, and field notes. Three developing patterns of talk were identified. Teachers initially engaged in what Carroll (2002) calls reified language. Reified language reflects the larger cultural narrative about teaching and learning (Ritchie & Wilson, 2000) and tends to leave unexamined the conflicts inherent in the tension between organizational and curricular responses (McNeil, 1986).

A brief period of transitional talk in which participants were torn between language that tended to be reactive and language that tended to be more-or-less reflective occurred in the discussion about midway between the start of the RPDG sessions and the end of the school year. This transitional talk found language turning more toward an interior understanding as teachers began to address the conflicts that they were uncovering.

The transition period runs contrary to the final phase of participant talk. Teachers began to adopt an epistemological position of students as knowers, leading to a significant change in the tone of their RPDG discussions. Participants now engaged in a meta-reflective discourse in which exteriority was pushed aside to make room for an internalization of curricular issues.

Reified Language

Teachers engaged in reified language at the beginning of our RPDG discussions. This discourse was also evident in our informal discussions in the classroom and in teacher interviews. Reified language is deeply embedded in the cultural narrative surrounding teaching and learning. It is also rooted in the contradictions contained in the conflicting models of school administration and control and considerations of teaching and learning (McNeil, 1986). I have described this discourse earlier as teachers' response to external pressures (Passman, 1999, 2002d). In this analysis, I found that reification, in this sense, is something more than merely a response to external pressure, although that is a strong aspect of this level of talk. In the early stages of RPDG talk, the combination of cultural narrative, externally imposed control, and teachers' responses to these factors lead to a strong model for 'teaching safe.'

The teaching safe model causes teachers to lower expectations in order to maintain control in the classroom. Lowered expectations are expressed in a number of ways. During our first session the subject of the length of student writing was raised. Mary, one of the 3rd grade teachers, volunteered, "If you

tell them it has to be a page then they only have this stuff for 3/4 or 2/3 of the page, then they'll just give you crud for the rest of the page." Mary does not expect her students to perform well. She focuses on the negative aspects of student writing, fully expecting that her students are incapable of rigorous performance.

Lowered expectations come in many forms. Lucy, a 2nd grade teacher, expressed her lowered expectations in a gentler manner than Mary did. "Yes, from what I see in my class, yes. That's a big problem. They don't know how else to say it. They don't have any more words." While it is clear that a 2nd grader's vocabulary is not as well developed as, say, a 6th grade student, rather than thinking in terms of not having enough words to express themselves Lucy might consider strategic approaches to increasing vocabulary in her classroom. Instead, she chooses to respond to the pressure of external controls by lowering her expectations and, in a gesture of throwing up her hands in defeat, blames her students thereby lowering her expectations for student performance.

Length of writing is an important issue for Texas teachers. The TAAS imposes notions of length as evidence for elaboration. Lupe, a 4th grade teacher directly effected by the TAAS writing exam, put it this way: "I mean that's just the way it is, especially if you want to get a three or a four on the TAAS."

In these early conversations there was a sense of frustration; of not knowing what to do exactly. When faced with systemic problems we often turn toward well-entrenched cultural narratives (Bruner, 1990). The Lawrenceville teachers are no exception to that rule. Teaching safe is a direct response to the pressure that is formed within the disconnect between a professional understanding of teaching and learning in conflict and politically imposed standards of control. The Lawrenceville teachers responded to the imposition of high-stakes standards and testing by lowering expectations for their students.

Still thinking about the length of papers, the lowered expectations and often disingenuous attitude toward students became apparent. Mary said, "I wish they would write shorter papers because they just ramble because they may say the same thing four times and say it four different ways." Sandy, the other 4th grade teacher argued, "You know, especially if you want to get a three or a four on the TAAS you're going to need to write an appropriate length for the paper, one that a reader would deem to be appropriate." Sandy's comment makes two very important points. First, she has reified the notion of length as appropriate. But even more importantly, she has reified

the notion that the whole process is outside of her immediate control; that control being vested in an anonymous outside reader. What is she to do?

Teachers also sense a disconnect between student knowledge and student performance. Lucy was speaking about her practice of engaging her 4th graders in Daily Oral Language as a means of teaching grammar skills to her students:

> They tell me every morning when we go over it, all these sentences. They tell me what's wrong and why its supposed to be this way and this is why I fix it and here are the reasons. But they don't do it. I think it's too much. I mean, I think they can't get their brain wrapped around mechanics and the content at the same time.

Lucy is, I believe, mistaking what appears to be a disconnect between student knowledge and performance and the apparent inability to combine knowledge systems into a functioning whole with what others have located as resistance (McNeil, 1986; Willis, 1981). Students resist safe teaching as boring and unauthentic. What is, in reality, required is a way to transform teachers' understanding of their own systemic role while separating themselves from the unexamined discourse growing out of the reified notions of teaching and learning that so permeated this early discourse.

Developing Articulation

Near the mid-point of the RPDG discussions the language began to shift. Teachers began to notice the disequilibrium between their reified language and the realities of inviting students into the practice of authorship (Smith, 1988). This discourse was often tentative and halting. Teachers engaged in small talk, asked for clarification, used imprecise language, were confused, expressed surprise or amazement at student performance, and challenged each other to focus on changing practice.

During a larger discussion about editing and revision Lucy remarked:

> Well I thought of a couple of other things and this and maybe I think they are this way because I am this way but before I put it down on paper I've got the whole story in my head. I'm not going to write a little bit and stop and think and write a little more. I'm going to sit and think and I think they think that way based on how I've seen them work. That's how they think.

Lucy is beginning to transition in her thinking about students. While earlier she had lowered expectations, now she recognizes her students as workers.

She began to realize that there are patterns to the writing process and that her students recognize those patterns as well. But the language is imprecise and halting. It is not quite smoothly articulated as she struggles to construct the language that reflects what she is coming to know about herself and her students.

Sandy began to incorporate new ideas into her classroom practice. I modeled sketch-to-stretch in her classroom and she began to make that strategy her own. She was proud to report that fact during one RPDG session.

> And that is a good point and and another thing I've done with kids that are like that need that time. Often they'll say, 'can I draw?' Because drawing helps them and I say, 'Oh sure, go ahead and draw,' and that's okay during that period of time.

I also spent a great deal of time using techniques to help students look and visualize, to become better observers of their surroundings. Students made many lists of things they noticed about the things that surrounded them. Susan began to notice changes in her students that she attributed to this increased sense of observation:

> This whole idea of writing all this list stuff, coming to as many descriptors as they possibly can come to and then beginning to write, you know, write something they don't usually...

Susan's thoughts were cut off by another participant as the discussion continued. What is important to note, however, is that, unlike earlier complaints that students didn't have enough words, she is extending the notion that we can positively impact vocabulary development.

Earlier, the issue of paper length was a critical issue. My modeling of writing focused less on length and more on time allotted to writing (Passman, 2003). Participating teachers began to recognize benefits to this practice. Lucy spoke positively about the practice:

> You were going back to trying to get them to write and to get that length in. I think the activities that you've done uh as far as setting a time limit, you've got five minutes and you have to write that continuous amount of time, that practice in itself is going to benefit that lengthy stuff and they've got to write.

Lucy is transitioning. She is moving from a posture that invokes narratives of control and moves toward a narrative of strong student participation under the guidance of a knowing mentor.

This phase of the discussion was riddled with what I identified as mentoring discourse. I spent a great deal of time and energy in the RPDG session helping the teacher participants construct the language that expressed what they were coming to know themselves. What was developing was a true zone of proximal development between the participants and myself as the more competent peer (Vygotsky, 1978). The exchanges at this point were filled with an energy and focus coupled with significant frustration. It was, however, clear that the discourse was trending toward a transformative turn. Evident in the new language was an understanding that there was a significant transformation that manifests itself in a developing construction of professionalism along with the growing sense that students were knowers, not merely passive recipients of knowledge.

Students as Knowers

The language of participating teachers was transformed as the year drew to a close. As teachers engaged in discussion they began to make holistic processes explicit, refined issues and began to construct names for processes. In all this they engaged in *meta-reflection*, reflecting on their own reflection, in transformative ways. Practice in the classroom appeared more joyous, students and teachers alike were more deeply engaged as writers and learners.

Lucy places mechanics in perspective:

> But I think that's true that the mechanics does come because if a kid writes a really good paper then he wants people to be able to read it and I even noticed on out authors chair and stuff that mine will come back to me an you know they will struggle with a sentence they're reading 'cause you can tell they're thinking I didn't write that exactly right and I had one come up to me yesterday and said, 'I forgot to put an 'e' on like can I go back and change that.

Not only is Lucy's conversation longer, it is filled with images that indicate transformation. The image of the student recognizing his or her own error and asking permission to make editorial changes is remarkable. This is a prime example of student as knower. What makes this transformative is that until this time Lucy did not make these kinds of connections.

Susan also made a transition. The group was engaged in a discussion of editing and revising narrative stories. She began to articulate her understanding of the process:

> I was we might have as a group gone beyond that and there is the

> question about fleshing a story out and so we have we've gone beyond mechanical. Is this first draft, second, really now we're talking about maybe what's the essence of the story.

One cannot talk about the essence of the story if the concern is over mechanical issues or length of papers. If writing is seen as the sum of the parts there is no essence. In short, Susan articulates a meta-reflective position that focuses on the overall change made by the group about how we talk about student writing.

Finally, Mary turns to the group and reports, "There's this level of sophistication that that that's in here. These kids and I talked about it and they weren't doing that {writing to get finished}." There is in Mary's statement, clarity of transition that she was willing to share with her students as well as with the other RPDG participants.

Implications for Teaching

I began this paper by arguing that a dominant cultural narrative exists related to what counts as school knowledge and the teaching and learning of that very knowledge. While it is clear that the dominant narrative in American education is one that discounts students, disregards the value of teachers, and places an inordinate emphasis on standards, this study also makes clear that we can develop processes to transform that narrative so that it more closely complies with what we know about teaching and learning and about student responsibility and engagement in their own education. Once teachers are transformed, schooling is no longer a cultural device for sorting and labeling students into vocational categories, rather schooling becomes a thoughtful, democratic experience for students and teachers alike.

This is not to say the process is easy, far from it. Breaking down and examining closely deeply seated narratives is a difficult task, filled with doubt, both internal and external. This study confirms the notion that transformative change occurs slowly, over long periods of time. There are stages of change that allow participants to confront their taken-for-granted ideas contained in the broader cultural narrative and construct replacements for ideas that are no longer understood as palatable.

Generally, three clear implications raise questions for further study. First, issues surrounding the speed of change are raised. Additionally, issues around the need for focused reflection in combination with effective modeling and in-service education are introduced. This includes building strong partnerships between schools and university consulting groups. Finally, this study raises questions about what exactly is the unit of change in school

reform. Is it a macro or systemic change or are we addressing change at the micro level, one teacher and one classroom at a time.

Speed of Change

Professional development in education is often perceived by school administrators as a 'quick fix' model. Administrators latch on to new ideas, often old thinking made pretty by new packaging, and impose those ideas on faculty as a 'perfect' solution to problems facing curriculum and instruction. A fast inservice day and perhaps a follow-up training session and the program is adopted school wide. The next year or two the program is replaced by another that promises what it cannot deliver.

This study confirms much of the work on staff development and professional education leading to meaningful change in curriculum and instruction practices (Passman, 1999, 2001a, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2002d, In Press). In Lawrenceville, as elsewhere effective change was not an overnight event. It did not occur because we introduced the T-I-P Writing Process to the teachers as a way to 'fix' the writing problems facing the school. The change that occurred did not happen immediately at all. In fact, the process of change was deeply related to the changes that occurred during the reflective practice discussions and modeling of writing pedagogy over the course of the school year.

Change was not a matter of imposing ideas from the outside and expecting teachers to adopt them wholesale. Quite the contrary, the changes that occurred at Lawrenceville were directly related to the hard work done by the participating teachers as they began to confront their own disconnections between practice and prejudices.

The Value of Partnering

The change was facilitated as a result of a strong partnership that developed between the teachers, the Region XVII consultant, and me. In the beginning I was embraced as an external expert, a force to be listened to but an outsider nevertheless. Over time the relationship changed. My role as a partner brought me into classrooms at least once every week and often more where I worked directly with students with teachers observing. Lessons were modeled as teachers saw new ideas that worked well in their classrooms with their students. My credibility rose and my advice sought out.

The partnership grew because I was willing to risk working directly with students and, perhaps even more importantly, the teachers were willing to risk having someone come into their classroom and teach. For me the risk is

actually minimal, having confidence in both self and ability, a genuine love for teaching writing, and a sense that I will likely succeed in reaching out to students, my interactions with the students were more-or-less routine. For the teachers, on the other hand, the response was anything but routine. I was invading their space, showing them up if you will. To open the doors of the classroom to strangers is an act that is difficult because of the private nature of teaching itself (Lortie, 1975). The mutuality of risk assumption went a long way in helping to grow this partnership.

Strong administrative support also helped grow the partnership. From the superintendent to the principal there was a commitment to this project from the beginning. I have described elsewhere (Passman, 2001a) how an unsupportive administration infects the success of growing partnerships. At Lawrenceville the partnership began in the superintendent's office.

The Unit of Change

Finally, this study reinforces notions that school change is not a matter of macro approaches, but is, rather, a function of micro approaches (Siskin, 1994). Imposed change does not work. Trying to manage change on a macro level provides too much opportunity for teachers to resist the desired change. By focusing on one teacher, or a small group of teachers, within a school change to the practical aspects of teaching and learning can be affected.

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